



**South Carolina Department of Agriculture  
Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner**

## **2015 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Program Announcement & Request for Application**

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**Please read all material before preparing and submitting the application. Failure to follow the instructions and requirements described in this Request for Application (RFA) may result in the disqualification of the application.**

### **Statement of Purpose**

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA) hereby requests proposals for reimbursable projects designed to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds will be made available to South Carolina from the Federal United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2015 fiscal year budget.

Although the United States Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA AMS) has not officially released projected SCBGP funding amounts to the states, SCDA anticipates approximately \$615,000.00 will be made available for projects in South Carolina. This figure is subject to change. The average award in South Carolina is \$30,000.00.

The SCBGP is authorized under section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note) and amended under section 10010 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Public Law 113-79 (Farm Bill). SCBGP is currently implemented under 7 CFR part 1291. Each state submits an application (referred to as the State Plan) that is reviewed and approved by USDA AMS personnel. In an effort to reach specialty crop initiatives throughout the state, the South Carolina Department of Agriculture has established a competitive grant process for these funds. **SCDA will accept proposals for these funds through May 15, 2015.** Once all proposals are submitted to SCDA, each will be carefully reviewed and evaluated based on the criteria listed at [www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp](http://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp).

### **Eligibility**

Responses will **only** be accepted from producer, industry or community-based **organizations** involved with, or that promote specialty crops.

1. Project must clearly demonstrate the purpose to enhance the competitiveness of a South Carolina specialty crop industry.
2. Project funds may only be used for activities benefitting specialty crops.
3. Project must benefit more than one individual, institution or organization. Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that directly benefit or provide a profit to a single organization, institution or individual.

### **Grantee Responsibilities and Accountability**

The grantee has full responsibility for the conduct of the project and for the results achieved. Each grantee shall monitor the day-to-day performance of the grant project to assure adherence to statutes, regulations, and grant terms and conditions. The grantee will carry out the activities described in the scope of work to achieve project goals, objectives, and desired outcomes.

The grantee will be accountable for all grant funds and must ensure all funds are used solely for authorized purposes. Selected projects will receive funding on a cost-reimbursement basis.

The grantee must ensure:

- Funds are used only for activities covered by the approved project plan.

- Funds are not used in violation of the restrictions and prohibitions of applicable statutes.
- All budget and performance reports are completed in a timely manner.

Each grantee must ensure they have an adequate accounting system in place and good internal controls to ensure expenditures and reimbursements are reported and maintained for a minimum of three years after the conclusion of the project.

### **Funding Areas and Priorities**

Specialty crops are defined by law as fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts and nursery crops. Refer to the following website for a complete list of specialty crops: [www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp](http://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp).

Project administrators may wish to consider submitting grants that increase the competitiveness of specialty crop farmers, including Native American and disadvantaged farmers. Increasing competitiveness may include developing local and rural agricultural economies, and improving food access in underserved communities. Special consideration will be given to projects that:

- Increase child and adult nutritional knowledge and consumption of specialty crops
- Improve efficiency and reduce costs of distribution systems
- Assist all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain in developing “Good Agricultural Practices”, “Good Handling Practices”, “Good Manufacturing Practices”
- Invest in specialty crop research, including organic research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes
- Enhance food safety
- Develop new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops; pest and disease control
- Develop organic and sustainable production practices
- Develop local and rural agricultural economies, and improve access of fresh fruits and vegetables in underserved communities

Research projects should be applied research and results should be available to producers, processors and/or consumers within one to two years of the grant term date. Projects with a large research component will be evaluated on their ability to document and transfer the results to the industry.

In addition, SCDA may choose to use a portion of the funds for projects conducted internally, including but not limited to, outreach activities, regulatory and/or marketing activities, trainings. All internal projects will also be evaluated in the competitive process.

### **Funding parameters, Award Information and Notification**

Projects awarded funding in the 2015 SCBGP will begin after the implementation of the Office of Management and Budget’s Uniform Guidance (“Supercircular”). State, local or Indian tribal governments, non-profit organizations, colleges and universities will be subject to 2 CFR 200, Uniform Administration Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. For-profit organizations will be subject to 48 CFR Subpart 31.2. All organization types are subject to 7 CFR 3015 and 7 CFR 3052.

Projects may be funded at varying levels depending on the nature of the project.

Projects must demonstrate strong justification for the requested budget, as well as, the potential for providing significant demonstrable benefits to South Carolina specialty crops.

SCDA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals submitted. SCDA is under no legal or other obligation to execute a grant on the basis of a response submitted to this RFA. SCDA shall not pay for any costs incurred by any entity in responding to this RFA.

#### **Application Proposal and Requirements**

Each proposed application shall not exceed six (6) pages (not including supporting documents). The acceptable font is Calibri, size eleven (11) point, and all margins must be one inch. The Application Form and Guidance Documents can be downloaded from the SCDA website at [www.sc.agriculture.gov](http://www.sc.agriculture.gov). All proposed applications must be received by 5:00 pm, Friday, May 15, 2015 to be considered.

Applications will only be accepted in Microsoft Word. Any applications submitted as a PDF will not be considered.

All grantees are required by USDA AMS to have a DUNS number. The Data Universal Numbering System is a system developed and regulated by Duns & Bradstreet that assigns a unique numeric identifier to a single business entity. This may be obtained online via this website: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or over the phone at 1-866-705-5711.

#### **Grant Proposals – Interested applicants must include all of the following information:**

- Application Form
- Proposal Narrative addressing the Following Information:
  - Project Title
  - Primary Applicant
  - Partner Organization(s)
  - Abstract
  - Project Purpose
  - Potential Impact
  - Expected Measureable Outcomes
  - Project Oversight
  - Project Commitment
  - Work Plan
  - Long Term Plan
  - Budget Snapshot
  - Budget Narrative/Justification

The complete application packet including the proposal with signatures must be RECEIVED by 5:00 pm (EST) on Friday, May 15, 2015. It is the applicant's responsibility to submit all materials necessary for evaluation early enough to ensure timely delivery. Late or incomplete proposals will not be accepted. Applicants may not supplement or amend the application after the deadline.

The preferred method of submission is electronic. Complete proposal narrative and application with signature must be submitted to [alondon@scda.sc.gov](mailto:alondon@scda.sc.gov). The email subject line must contain 1-3 word description of project and "SC 2015 – Organization Name."

If applications are to be mailed, please use the following addresses for the SCDA :

Physical Address:  
SCDA  
1200 Senate Street, Fifth Floor  
Columbia, SC 29201

Mailing Address:  
SCDA  
PO Box 11280  
Columbia, SC 29211

The respondent is solely responsible for ensuring that their complete application, regardless of method of delivery, is sent to and actually received by SCDA in a timely manner and at the proper destination.

### **Successful Application Requirements**

#### **Reporting**

Reporting requirements are project specific and based on the duration of the project. By signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) the grantee agrees to all accountability and reporting requirements. Grantees must show both a strong progress of work completed on all projects as well as financial progress. Failure to comply with reporting requirements may result in the withholding of a request for reimbursement and/or termination of the award.

Each MOU will indicate which reports will be necessary for the project, as well as the estimated report due dates.

#### **Budget Development Information**

Grantees will be required to submit payment requests quarterly, but no more frequently than monthly in order to show significant financial and programmatic progress. Payment requests must include sufficient detail and supporting documentation. Backup detail may include, but is not limited to, documentation of personnel expenses, or copies of invoices.

Up to 90% of the total grant award may be paid provided the work for which payment is requested has been completed and proper documentation has been submitted. The remaining 10% will only be disbursed once all reporting requirements have been met, including, but not limited to, the final performance report.

Generally, expenses that are necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient performance and administration of the project are eligible. Grant funds may not be used to supplant normal business costs but instead must be used to cover the costs incurred for the approved proposed activities.

Examples of eligible expenditures include:

- Personnel costs – including salary and benefits;
- Direct operational expenses (other) – any expenses that do not fall into other categories directly related to the proposed activities;
- Supplies that cost less than \$5000, such as office supplies, printing services, and materials needed to accomplish the proposed project;
- Contracts – agreements made with a third-party to perform a portion of the award;
- Travel, including mileage reimbursement and lodging;

Expenses may be prohibited by state or federal law or determined to be ineligible by program guidelines. Examples of these expenditures include, but are not limited to the following:

- Alcoholic beverages;

- Entertainment;
- Contributions, charitable or political;
- Expenses falling outside of the contract period;
- Expenses for expenditures not listed in the project budget or an approved amendment;
- Expenses that are not adequately documented;
- Meal reimbursements related to travel, meetings, conferences or other events;
- Advertising and Public Relations costs designed solely to promote the image of an organization, general logo or general brand rather than eligible specialty crops are unallowable;
- Coupon/incentive redemptions or price discounts. Costs associated with printing, distribution, or promotion of coupons/tokens or price discounts are allowable only if they solely promote the specialty crop rather than promote or benefit a program or single organization.
- Costs associated with the use of trade shows, meeting rooms, display, demonstrations, exhibits, and the rental of space are allowable only if they solely promote the specialty crop. Cost sharing to promote both specialty crops and non-specialty crops is not allowable for these types of expenses.

### **General Information**

Selected applicants will receive a Notice of Grant Award (NGA) letter and an official Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from SCDA. The NGA is not legally binding until an MOU is fully executed.

SCDA reserves the right to fund projects partially or fully. SCDA reserves the right to reject all applications and is not liable for costs incurred by the Applicant in the development, submission, or review of the application, or for costs incurred by the Applicant prior to the effective date of grant agreement.

SCDA reserves the right to alter, amend or clarify any provisions, terms or conditions of this program or any grant awarded as a result thereof, or to terminate this program at any time prior to the execution of an agreement, if SCDA deems any such action to be in the best interest of SCDA and of the State of South Carolina. The decision of SCDA will be administratively final in this regard.

The Applicant is required to disclose any existing or potential conflicts of interest relative to this grant program. Failure to disclose any such relationship may result in the Applicant's disqualification or termination of agreement.

### **General Compliance Information**

Grantees must comply with USDA AMS and SCDA reporting requirements and financial procedures outlined in the grant agreement. Any delegation by the Grantee to a subcontractor regarding any duties and responsibilities imposed by the grant award must be approved in advance by SCDA and shall not relieve the Grantee of its responsibilities to SCDA for their performance.

Grantees must remain in full compliance with state and federal laws and regulations. Non-compliance may result in termination of the grant or ineligibility for reimbursement of expenses.

Grantees must keep a separate bookkeeping account with a complete record of all expenditures relating to the project. Records shall be maintained for three years after the completion of the project.

## Application for SCDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – FY 2015

\*Please print and use this page as the Project Cover Page

<b>Project Title:</b>	
<b>Organization Name:</b>	
<b>Contact Name:</b>	
<b>Contact Email:</b>	
<b>Amount Requested:</b>	
<b>Full Name</b>	
<b>Title</b>	
<b>Organization</b>	
<b>Telephone / Fax</b>	
<b>E-Mail Address</b>	
<b>Mailing Address</b>	
<b>City, State, Zip</b>	
<b>DUNS Number</b>	
<p><b>Check all applicable statements</b> This proposal will benefit the following groups:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Beginning Farmer.</b> A group of individuals or an entity that has not operated a farm for more than 10 years and substantially participates as a group of operators.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Socially Disadvantaged Farmer.</b> A farmer who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A "Socially Disadvantaged Group" is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>USDA Certified Organic Farmer.</b> A farmer or grower that has complied with all regulations set forth by the USDA to be a registered Certified Organic farmer, and intends to continue an organically run farm.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Certified SC Grown Member.</b> A farmer or grower that is a member of the Certified SC Grown program administered by the SCDA.</p>	
<p><b><u>Eligible Applicants</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applications will be accepted from agricultural associations, industry/producer groups, community based organizations, and members of academia that seek to improve the competitiveness of specialty crops in South Carolina.</li> <li>Applications for grant funds must produce measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution or an individual.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Non-Eligible Applicants</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individuals.</li> </ul>	

***\*Using additional pages, please submit the following in Microsoft Word:***

### **Project Abstract**

Include a project summary of 250 words or less that is suitable for dissemination to the public. It should include the need for the project, a brief description of the goals and outcomes, and your plan for evaluating and measuring the success of the project or program.

### **Project Purpose**

The project purpose should be not more than one page in length, using no less than 11 point font, Calibri style. The following questions should be addressed in this section:

- What is the specific issue, problem or need to be addressed by the project?
- Why is the project important and timely?

If any of the project activities or costs has the potential to enhance the competitiveness of non-specialty crops (ex: farmers market, general buy local, CSA etc.) describe the methods or processes you will implement to verify all grant funds are expended on activities and costs that only enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops. If you propose a cost-share or match to cover non-specialty crop activities and costs, include the specific costs or contributions proposed to meet the cost-share or match, the source of funding or contributions, and describe how you determined the appropriate amount of cost-share or match.

If the project is a continuation of a project that the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funded previously, describe how the project differs from and builds on the previous project's efforts. Describe also the likelihood of the project becoming self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent on grant funds. Specifically, provide a summary (3 to 5 sentences per project) of the accomplishments of the previous project(s) that have led you to seek continued funding.

Have you submitted the project to another Federal or State grant program other than the SCBGP for funding and/or is another Federal or State grant program other than the SCBGP funding the project currently?

- If no, indicate that you have not.
- If yes, identify the Federal and/or State grant program by name and describe how the new project differs from and supplements efforts of the SCBGP and the other Federal or State grant program rather than duplicates funding efforts. The SCBGP will not fund duplicative projects.

### **Potential Impact**

This section should show how the project benefits the specialty crop industry in SC and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution or individual. This section should not be more than one page in length, using no less than 11 point font, and should address the following questions:

- Who are the beneficiaries of the project?



- How many beneficiaries will be impacted?
- How will the project benefit the specialty crop beneficiaries?
- What is the potential economic impact of the project if it can be estimated?
- If applicable, how will the project have a multi-state (benefitting two or more states) or national impact?

### **Expected Measureable Outcomes**

Provide at least one distinct, quantifiable, measurable project outcome that solely supports enhancing the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops. If the outcome measures are long- term and occur after the project's completion, then identify an intermediate outcome that occurs before the end of the grant period and that is expected to help lead to the fulfillment of long-term outcomes.

- Provide a GOAL - A goal is what you hope to achieve as a result of conducting the activities and producing the outputs (tangible results that can be seen, touched, handled, or moved about) of the project. Examples of outcome-oriented goals could include a change in knowledge, change in behavior, and/or a change in conditions that make a difference for the beneficiaries of the project.
- Provide a PERFORMANCE MEASURE - Identify a performance measure for each goal that you will use to measure the actual project results compared to the expected results. These are usually expressed in quantifiable terms and should be objective and measurable (numeric values, percentages, scores and indices, although in certain circumstances qualitative measures are appropriate).
- Provide a BENCHMARK - For each performance measure provided, include a benchmark. The benchmark is the baseline data against which you will measure your success. Examples of a benchmark could include current or initial level of knowledge, current behavior, or current conditions.
- Provide a TARGET - For each benchmark provided, indicate the TARGET. The TARGET is the level of change that you anticipate by the completion of the project. This is NOT the target audience or target population.
- Provide a PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN - How will you monitor your progress toward achieving each GOAL?
  - What are your data sources for monitoring performance? For example, will you conduct surveys or use questionnaires?
  - How will you collect the required data? Be sure to include the frequency of your data collection.
  - Describe how you will share the results of the project with specialty crop growers and other interested specialty crop stakeholders.

### **Work Plan**

Identify the activities necessary to accomplish the project objectives. Make sure to include the performance monitoring/data collection plan activity described in the expected measureable

outcome section in the work plan. When expected measurable outcomes are monitored outside the grant period, include the performance monitoring plan in the work plan and indicate how monitoring will occur after the grant period ends without Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funding.

Indicate who will perform the work of each activity. If collaborative arrangements or subcontracts are used, make sure you specify their role and responsibilities in performing project activities.

Include timelines for accomplishing each activity. Make sure to include the month and year the project is scheduled to begin.

Example:

<p><b>Project Activity.</b> Describe the project activities that are necessary to accomplish the objectives. Make sure you include your performance monitoring/data collection activities.</p>	<p><b>Who will do the work?</b> Indicate the project participants who will do the work of each activity, including subrecipients, and/or contractors. If you request grant funds for personnel and contractors, you must include them in the work plan to demonstrate the requested funding is warranted. If you request funds for travel, these activities must also be included.</p>	<p><b>When will the activity be accomplished?</b> Include a timeline that indicates when each activity will occur (at least month and year) and beginning and end dates for the project. Make sure the work plan timeline shows that the project will be completed within the allowable grant period.</p>
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**Budget Narrative**

All expenses described in this Budget Narrative must be associated with expenses that will be covered by the SCBGP. The following applicable chart(s) must be used in the project proposal:

<b><i>Budget Summary</i></b>	
<u>Expense Category</u>	<u>Funds Requested</u>
Personnel	
Fringe Benefits	
Travel	
Equipment	
Supplies	

Contractual	
Other	

- **Personnel** - List the organization's employees or job position titles whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Name/Title	Level of Effort (# of hours OR % FTE)	Funds Requested
<b>Personnel Subtotal</b>		

- **Fringe Benefits** - Provide the fringe benefit rates for each of the project's salaried employees described in the Personnel section that will be paid with SCBGP funds.

Name/Title	Fringe Benefit Rate	Funds Requested
<b>Fringe Subtotal</b>		

- **Travel** - Explain the purpose for each Trip Request. Please note that travel costs are limited to those allowed by formal organizational policy; in the case of air travel, project participants must use the lowest reasonable commercial airfares. For recipient organizations that have no formal travel policy and for-profit recipients, allowable travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulation, issued by GSA, including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations. This information is available at <http://www.gsa.gov>.

Trip Destination	Purpose of the Trip	Type of Expense (airfare, car rental, hotel, meals, mileage, etc.)	Unit of Measure (days, nights, miles)	Number of Units	Cost per Unit	Number of Travelers Claiming the Expense	Funds Requested

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- **Equipment** - Describe any special purpose equipment to be purchased or rented under the grant. “Special purpose equipment” is tangible, nonexpendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$5,000 per unit and is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities. Rental of “general purpose equipment” must also be described in this section. Purchase of general purpose equipment is not allowable under this grant.

Item Description	Justification for Equipment	Rental or Purchase	Funds Requested
<b>Equipment Subtotal</b>			

- **Supplies** - List the materials, supplies, and fabricated parts costing less than \$5,000 per unit and describe how they will support the purpose and goal of the proposal and solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Item Description	Justification for Supplies	Per-Unit Cost	Number of Units/Pieces Purchased	Funds Requested
<b>Supplies Subtotal</b>				

- **Contractual/Consultant** - Contractual/consultant costs are the expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship. If there is more than one contractor or consultant, each must be described separately. (Repeat this section for each contract/consultant.)
  - Please verify your organization used its own procurement procedures which reflect applicable State and local laws and regulations and conform to the Federal laws and standards identified in 7 CFR Part 3019.40 through 48 or 3016.36, as applicable.

- If a contractor/consultant has not yet been selected, provide an acknowledgement that the procurement processes have not yet been conducted, and an assurance that the applicant will use its own procurement procedures which reflect applicable State and local laws and regulations and conform to the Federal law and standards identified in 7 CFR Part 3019.40 through 48 or 3016.36, as applicable.
- Provide an itemized budget (personnel, fringe, travel, equipment, supplies, other, etc.) with appropriate justification. Please note that statutory limitations on indirect costs also apply to contractors and consultants.
- If contractor employee and consultant hourly rates of pay exceed the salary of a GS-15 step 10 Federal employee in your area (for more information please go to <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/>), provide a justification for the expenses. This limit does not include fringe benefits, travel, indirect costs, or other expenses.

<b><i>Contractual/Consultant Subtotal</i></b>	
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- **Other** - Include any expenses not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Be sure to break down costs into cost/unit. Expenses in this section include, but are not limited to, meetings and conferences, communications, rental expenses, advertisements, publication costs, and data collection.

If you budget meal costs for reasons other than meals associated with travel per diem, provide an adequate justification to support that these costs are not entertainment costs.

Item Description	Justification of the Expense	Per-Unit Cost	Number of Units	Funds Requested

- **Program Income** - Program income is gross income directly generated by the grant-supported activity, or earned only because of the grant agreement during the grant period of performance. Program income includes, but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed; the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award (this includes items sold at cost if the cost of producing the item was funded in whole or partially with grant funds); registration fees for conferences, etc.

<u>Source/Nature of Program Income</u>	<u>Description of how you will reinvest the program income into the project to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops</u>	<u>Estimated Income</u>
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	<b>Program Income Total</b>	

### **Project Oversight**

The following questions and information should be addressed in this section:

- Who or what will oversee the project activities?
- How will oversight be performed? Include timeline information.

### **Project Commitment**

Provide the following information in this section:

- What specialty crop stakeholders outside of the lead organization support this project?
- How will all project stakeholders work toward the goals and outcomes of the project?

### **Additional Information/Attachments**

Biographical Sketches

- Provide a resume or biographical sketch of each person who has primary responsibility for developing and implementing the proposal.
- Information should clarify each person's project responsibilities, and highlight their qualifications.

Letters of Support

- Attach any letters providing evidence of support for the project.

**Questions or concerns relating to the South Carolina Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant Program should be directed to:**

Amy London  
803-734-2200  
alondon@scda.sc.gov